

MONEY TALKS: IT PAYS TO LISTEN

THE INITIATIVE

Opportunity meets challenge and creates new hope.

The Challenge: For the past several years, Louisville has been laying a foundation to move the financial well-being of its residents to the forefront of community awareness and action. A wide array of public and non-profit programs work wonders every day to address the crisis experienced by residents across a spectrum of needs: food, housing, health, employment, transportation, childcare, clothing. Two initiatives, Bank On Louisville and Family Economic Success Network, have brought a rich variety of partners together to help unbanked and under-banked people connect to mainstream financial services.

However, even with the high level of dedication and hard work from these programs and initiatives, there is also the painful recognition that many clients return for additional services as soon as the next crisis occurs. Our community must look to innovative approaches and integrated strategies that will break the crisis-to-crisis cycle.

Financial Empowerment, providing support to increase the capability of clients to make informed choices and encourage them to take action toward their own financial goals, offers a promising innovative approach to invigorate the community determination to break the crisis-to-crisis cycle.

The Opportunity: In 2011, Metro Government was awarded a grant from Living Cities to build on Louisville's foundational work and create a service provider approach that embeds financial empowerment into the homelessness service provider system and be a model to be incorporated into all human service systems in the community. Money Talks was born.

Money Talks Project Vision: In Louisville, service providers are leaders in increasing our community's financial well-being by connecting residents to mainstream banking services and education about building wealth.

Money Talks Logic Model: If service providers learn about financial empowerment and its role in creating client success, they will view it as an asset and be willing to integrate it in their service delivery systems (intake, assessment, counseling, case management, referral, tracking, etc.). And, if a high-quality coordinated financial empowerment approach is created and included in all aspects of client services, it will significantly increase each client's success in setting and achieving financial goals that will build assets over time.

For the past fourteen months, two community teams have been working on creating the infrastructure needed to bring this financial empowerment integration approach to life in the homeless service providers system, and ultimately to help all human service providers understand the value of financial empowerment and the need to incorporate it into their current service delivery systems.

Louisville's First Financial Empowerment Summit is the perfect place to share the work and hope generated by Money Talks. The next pages present common definitions, the framework, and the values and assumptions to build a financial empowerment approach that can be incorporated into any service delivery system. We hope you will be intrigued, excited and willing to join the efforts.



Asset Building:

A process of accumulating, developing, and preserving financial, human, and social resources to increase the economic stability of individuals, families, and the community.

Financial Capability:

Being able to take effective action to pursue financial stability and weather downturns.

Financial Empowerment:

Providing support to increase the capability of clients to make informed choices and encourage them to take action toward their own financial goals.

Financial Education:

The activities that lead to an increased understanding of financial and personal tools, resources, and services.

Financial Stability:

Having enough resources to pay for food, healthcare, housing and other basic needs, navigate short term crises, and begin to build personal assets.

Financial Coaching:

A form of financial empowerment support that offers a relationship-based approach to encourage goal-setting and self-accountability.

THE VALUES AND ASSUMPTIONS

GENERAL CONTEXT:

“Systems,” including the Financial Empowerment system, are composed of:

- the people who use the services,
- the people who work within the system (service delivery providers and administrators),
- the people who focus on influencing the system, and
- the policies, rules, and regulations that govern all the people and services.

Homelessness is the result of a collision of personal circumstances, systemic issues and policy factors.

Everyone relies on a system of support, not just the people we serve.

Serving the people in the homeless provider system will benefit the community, and the people served in the homeless provider system will benefit from a community-wide focus.

People receiving our services:

- Have many strengths, and are resourceful and important.
- Have the right to access safe, decent and affordable housing.
- Should not be defined by their circumstances.
- Should be able to impact the system from which they are receiving services.

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO SERVE WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Administrators, service-delivery providers, and others who serve:

- Have many strengths, and are resourceful and important.
- Should be centered around the people who receive services, as opposed to provider-centered or funding-centered.
- Should be relationship-based with each other and with the people receiving services.
- Should maintain connection to, and with, the people they serve.
- Should be committed to the work they do and the people they serve.
- Should have a working knowledge and understanding of the people they serve.

- The goal of the Financial Empowerment Framework is to help individuals identify, manage and build assets.
- The Financial Empowerment Framework begins with developing income and/or benefits.
- Financial success should be defined by each person served.
- The Financial Empowerment approach should have a community-wide focus – of value to everyone.
- Financial Empowerment is ongoing and lifelong.
- Financial Empowerment is an avenue to eliminate poverty.

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT SYSTEM

The System should:

- Be transparent and accessible to everyone.
- Provide an environment that encourages continual learning, by offering best practices, training, resources and information to all.
- Support and nurture the people administering, providing and receiving the services, in order to yield measureable results and outcomes, which benefit all.
- Expect accountability from itself, the people working within the system, the people it serves, and be open to independent evaluation.
- Adapt to needs and opportunities: be flexible.
- Value individual change and progress, as well as macro results.
- Offer access to high quality, safe and affordable services, with a focus on a “no hassle default” model



Cross-System Connection: With its universal reach and accessibility, a Community-wide Financial Empowerment System may serve to help unify related systems like homeless, workforce, health and others.